

IAA QUARTERLY REPORT

U.S.G. Agency: Federal Emergency Management Agency

Country: The Bahamas

Reporting Period: October 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001

Project Completion: December 31, 2001

Agency Team Leader: Janet Kennedy

A. Activity Objectives:

FEMA's first activity in the Bahamas was to conduct an emergency management "needs assessment." This activity required two steps: 1) a profile and analysis of the Bahamas' current organizational approach to the collection, use and dissemination of disaster management information and resources; 2) a comparison of the existing system to an idealized system with the resulting identification of needs to achieve the improved system.

FEMA's second activity was to conduct a workshop in Nassau with approximately 30 representatives from national government agencies, island administrators, local elected officials, private industry and tourism groups. The purpose of the workshop was to define the most needed areas of improvement in the field of emergency management and disaster response. These areas would become the subject module for the train-the-trainer course.

The goal of the project is to enhance the country's emergency management capabilities by identifying areas where existing processes can be improved and developing an emergency management training program for personnel throughout the island. FEMA's technical assistance will also assist the emergency management office of the national government to build coalitions focused on improving mitigation and preparedness measures.

B. Narrative Report:

On November 27, 2000, a FEMA team visited the Bahamas in order to assess the current emergency management system. Over the next five days, the FEMA team met with officials of the national government in Nassau and visited the family islands of Eleuthera and Abaco to meet with District Administrators, local elected officials, and members of local disaster response committees.

Several issues were raised repeatedly throughout the meetings. They were:

- Communications (both the technical requirements as well as the clarity and timeliness of messages)
- Accuracy and speed of damage assessment
- Training for shelter managers and overall suitability of shelters.
- Training for volunteers, disaster response workers, and appointed and elected officials.
- Forming pre-disaster mitigation partnerships.

The overall impression of emergency management in the Bahamas was very positive. All of the officials the FEMA team met with were knowledgeable about disaster preparedness and mitigation measures and were enthusiastic about further improving their capabilities. There exists a very strong base of social trust and civil commitment to build upon. Discussions with the Disaster Preparedness Subcommittee in Nassau led the FEMA team to the conclusion that the pieces are in place for a strong and effective national emergency management system. FEMA hopes to be able to suggest ways to strengthen and tighten that system to make it as effective as possible. We believe the most effective way to achieve that goal is to further define and clarify the procedures and protocols used for emergency management.

FEMA prepared a report and submitted it to the Bahamian government that proposes to address these issues in a two-step process.

This first step consisted of a focus-group meeting held from June 12-15, 2001, in Nassau. Representatives from FEMA, national government officials of the Bahamas, island administrators, local elected officials, private industry and tourism representatives spent three days discussing emergency management topics. The participants were asked to define the most needed areas of improvement in the field of emergency management and disaster response. The results of this workshop were used to develop the modules for the train-the-trainer course, which is the second step of the process.

A train-the-trainer course entitled “Developing a Framework for Emergency Management” was developed for delivery to key officials of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Then in turn, course attendees would proceed to train other local and national government agencies and emergency management personnel. Modules for the pilot course as defined by the focus group include: the identification of hazards in the community and develop risk assessments, development of a disaster plan; communicate effectively in a disaster both within the island and with the national government; complete damage assessments following a disaster; manage resources effectively prior to and during a disaster; and establish an Emergency Operations Center.

C. Activities this Period:

Two instructors from FEMA’s National Emergency Training Center were scheduled to conduct the first trainer-the-trainer course for key officials of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas November 11-15, 2001, but due to the events of September 11, 2001, the course was cancelled and unable to be rescheduled before the project completion date. Therefore the Instructor Guide, Student Manual, Handouts, Toolkit, and CD containing all the materials and visuals were forward to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas for their use.

D. Estimated Expenditures to Date:

ALLOCATED	FUNDS EXPENDED	FUNDS AVAILABLE
\$ 150,000	\$ 82,518	\$ 67,482